



ST THOMAS'S SCHOOL
KOHIMARAMA. AUCKLAND

Newsletter

Friday 3 September 2021

COVID-19 Alert Level 4 – Community Communication #4

Principal's Message

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Whanau,

As we continue on with Alert Level 4 lockdown, below is advice from the Ministry of Health regarding what school life may look like when we do return to site. In the meantime our learning from home programmes will continue as usual and we have the addition of a wellbeing page on our website with information to help you support your children's wellbeing. There are some videos, tips and links to help improve wellbeing as well as advice from some experts. There is also a page dedicated to supporting children during this latest lockdown. You can go to our website to see the new page or by clicking this link.

Schools outside of Auckland are now open for students whose parents must attend work and where there is no one to look after their children at home. Attendance in those schools is between 1 and 2% of students this week.

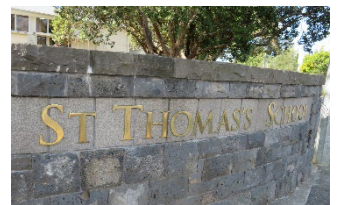
Public Health Advice for Students Returning to School at Alert Level 3

This following is a statement from the Ministry of Health (31 August 2021) regarding students returning to school at Alert Level 3. Any updates we receive from the Ministry will be shared with our community.

We continue to look at the evolving evidence around the transmission of COVID-19 in different settings, including educational settings, particularly in light of the new variants to inform the public health advice about face coverings (including masks) for children and young people at school and early learning services. The two key public health principles that support Alert Level 3 are first to minimise the risk that someone gets infected in the first place, and second to limit the number of possible contacts people have if they do get infected to make it easier to rapidly stop further spread. When reviewing the evidence for children and young people, we have considered the potential benefits of the role face coverings play in reducing the spread of the virus and any potential harms or risks.

The Alert Level 3 approach in a school environment is designed to limit the number of people that children have contact with based on these principles. Taking into account the other mitigating measures in schools, it is possible to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission in these settings. Because it is possible to ensure that children are within the same group each day with no mixing between groups, it is acceptable from a public health perspective to have a group of children learning together. Our advice is to limit this to 10 children in each group.

Schools reinforcing good hygiene practices are undertaking regular cleaning and having staff, children and young people are staying away if they are sick. At Alert Level 3, where practicable, physical distancing is in place, particularly between adults. Overall, we think it is important not to interfere with learning as much as possible, so it's about balancing up the benefits against the potential harms.



Compared to other places, schools and early learning services are not environments where we have seen significant spread of COVID-19. Household members and work colleagues who are in close contact with people with COVID-19 are the most common sources of transmission. Based on what we know about face coverings and transmission in children, we are taking this balanced approach at this time. If new evidence emerges, this guidance will be revised.

It is also important that parents fully support this approach by doing their bit – keeping children home if they are unwell and seeking medical advice about whether a child may need to be tested, strictly maintaining their family 'bubble' outside the school environment and ensuring great hygiene practices at all times.

Vaccine Consents for Young People

A number of parents and whānau are asking about who should give consent for their 12 to 15-years-olds to be vaccinated. Following is some messaging from the Ministry of Health regarding vaccination of your people.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect each of us and our whānau. The more of us who are vaccinated in our community, the greater our immunity.

The Government approved a vaccine to immunise and protect 12 to 15-year-olds. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been approved by our Medsafe experts. This vaccine is also used for 12 to 15-year-olds in other countries such as Canada, USA, Europe and Japan.

[Here is a link to a video that explains how the vaccine works.](#)

Many parents and whānau would like to provide informed consent on behalf of their young person. The easiest way to do this is for a parent or caregiver to be present during vaccination and provide verbal consent. You can book your young person in for vaccination at the same time as your vaccination or accompany them to their appointment.

You can book through your GP or through vaccination centres:

Book online through [Book My Vaccine](#)

For a group booking, call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on 0800 28 29 26 (8am–8pm, seven days a week).

Staff & Student Vaccinations

A parent has queried whether the parent community would be able to find out about the percentage of COVID vaccination levels within the school as a whole and each classroom before students returned. Vaccination is a personal choice unless a person is employed in specific role such as MIQ. As a school we respect privacy regarding vaccination and that applies to staff, students and our parent community. Should the Ministry of Education receive directions from the Ministry of Health that schools are required to gather this information then we would comply, however at this stage we have not received such direction therefore we will not be gathering this data. Anecdotally, quite a few of our staff had received either one or both vaccinations prior to Level 4 lockdown and I surmise that more will have done so since then.

Safe TV viewing for Students in Alert Levels 3 and 4

More time at home can see young people watching more TV, and potentially watching outside their normal viewing hours – which can increase the risk they will encounter unsuitable viewing. Tools are available to help parents protect students from TV content that may harm them.

A practical guide to the latest tools (including parental locks, classifications, advisories, warnings and timebands) plus an informative video from Jordan 'How to DAD' Watson is available at www.safeviewing.co.nz

These tools are overseen by the Broadcasting Standards Authority, which provides further useful information [here](#).

Maintaining school grounds at Alert Level 4

The Ministry of Education have advised schools that Property Managers are now able to access the school to maintain the grounds and playing fields. Our Property Manager, Glen, will now access the school site to cut the grass.

Cycle Path to the City

Below is a link to an overview of what this exciting project is going to look like when complete.

Last days to have a say on Section 4 (Orakei Basin to Tamaki Drive) Glen Innes to Tamaki Drive Shared Path. Feedback must be in by 6 September. For more information and online feedback forms visit the Auckland Transport project page [here](#).

